

How do I Start my own Tutoring Business?

There are many considerations involved in starting your own tutoring business, from the legal requirements to building a reputation. This article explains how to set yourself up as a private tutor and rid yourself of agencies and their commissions.

Tutoring is a rewarding career – both personally and financially. And running your own business is also very gratifying. But getting started, gaining a reputation, and looking after the legalities can be daunting. There is a lot you have to decide so let's start at the very beginning.

Which subjects should I teach as a tutor?

In general, the subject you will want to teach will be the one in which you are best qualified. Your degree subject or the ones you studied at A-level. This is not always practical though. If your degree is in Business Studies, for example, then you would find potential students very thin on the ground!

The most popular subjects are the core school subjects of Maths, English, and the Sciences. Languages and the humanities don't offer as much opportunity. This being the case, you may want to teach students who are at lower levels in subjects you have lower qualifications in.

It might also be wise to search for tutors in your area and see what they are teaching. If you can spot a gap in the market then that will present a greater opportunity than a subject in which the market is already flooded.

Is there enough work for private tutors?

To run a feasible business you of course need to have enough work. The good news is that over a quarter of children in the UK receive private tuition. The bad news is that there are 100,000 private tutors out there, all vying for that business. The two most important things are becoming established and building a reputation.

How can you build up a reputation as a tutor?

With tutoring being such a competitive world, connecting yourself with customers can be very hard at first. Having an online presence is vital. Online searches are where many parents seeking a tutor begin, and almost everybody checks out a website before making a big decision.

Another option is to advertise locally, in local newspapers, village publications, cards in shop windows and wherever else you can think of. Make sure you ask any clients where they heard about you. That will let you know which outlets were the most successful.

Once you have one or two clients then your business should expand through word of mouth. If you are a good tutor then parents will tell their friends about you. Likewise, if they think you are a bad one then they will quickly spread the word. Keeping your clients happy is essential for all businesses, including tutors.

Should I tutor from home?

If you opt to be an in-person tutor, rather than an online one (more on that later) you have to decide where your lessons will take place. You have two choices (unless you want to rent a classroom, which is an extra cost) - from your home, or your students' homes. Both have their advantages and disadvantages.

Having your students come to you is the most convenient option. It saves you time and money in not having to travel, and it allows you to fit more clients into your day. On the negative side, fewer parents will be willing to come to you than would want you to go to them.

Visiting your students in their homes will give you a broader number of prospective clients. Children are also more relaxed in their home environment and may even learn better. The downside is the time and money that you will lose having to make the journey. You may want to increase your prices for home visits to cover this, but that has negative effects of its own.

Should I tutor online?

An alternative to face-to-face tutoring is tutoring online. This is much more convenient for both parties as neither has to travel. The potential earnings are slightly lower, as people expect to pay less for an online rather than an in-person service.

You can tutor online via a video conference platform, such as Skype or Microsoft Teams. There are a variety of these so I suggest you do some research on which is most suitable for you. Be aware that some may require a monthly fee.

How much should I charge as a tutor?

The amount you charge depends on your level of experience, your qualifications, your reputation, and the area you live in. It also varies depending on where your lessons take place (at your home, the client's home, or online).

As a rough guide, inexperienced tutors should charge £15 to £18 per hour, graduates £18 to £23 per hour, qualified teachers £23 to £28 per hour, and highly sought-after tutors £28 to £35 per hour. These rates apply outside of London. Prices in the capital can be twice as high.

Of course, if you teach from your home then you should charge slightly less to account for clients' travelling costs, and if you teach online then prices should be reduced by about 25%.

Do I have to report private tutoring income?

If you run your own business then you **MUST** register as self-employed with HMRC. Make sure you do this in the first three months of your business, otherwise you may be liable for a fine. You will also have to complete a self-assessment tax return every year. HMRC will use this to calculate how much income tax you have to pay.

You will have to keep accounts. These are detailed records of any money you earn, any expenses, and the dates of each. This may sound daunting but, if you keep on top of it, it needn't be. Simply make a spreadsheet or word document in which all income and expenses are marked. This will make filling in your tax return so much easier.

You can deduct expenses from your profits and so decrease your tax bill. Some examples of valid expenses are essential materials (such as textbooks or stationery), advertising, travel, and insurance.

Do I need insurance to be a tutor?

It is not absolutely necessary to have insurance to work as a private tutor in the UK, but it would be wise – especially if you are teaching students in your own home. Here are some types you might want to consider:

Public liability insurance. Protects you from claims of injury to a person, or damage to their property. This is particularly important if you work from home. Something as simple as a child tripping over in your house could make you liable for a claim.

Professional indemnity insurance. Protects you from claims of malpractice or misconduct. Parents who are unhappy with bad grades, failed exams, or perceived incorrect teaching might make claims of negligent service so it would be wise to insure yourself against such events.

Business and portable equipment insurance. Protects your equipment from loss or damage. This applies wherever you teach and is a good way to cover costs of repair or replacement.

Do I need a DBS check to be a tutor?

A DBS check (Disclosure and Barring Service) is a check of your criminal record. So, do tutors have to have them? The quick answer to this is 'no'. There are no regulations at present requiring tutors to have a DBS check. That said, having one will make hiring you all the more appealing to parents.

Do I need to join a professional tutors association?

It is not necessary for private tutors to join any professional tutors association but there are some advantages to it. Being in contact with other tutors is a good way to 'network' and to stay up to date with ongoing developments in the world of tutoring. Being self-employed can be a lonely experience so exchanging news and thoughts with other tutors is often refreshing.

Running your own tutoring business can be tough, but with the information we've shared in this article, you'll feel confident enough to give it a go. I wish you every success in this richly rewarding enterprise.